

Cultivating Ethical Personhood: An Experiential Webinar & Workshop

Angela J. Davis | St. Stephen's College

Trying to imagine ethics without an awareness of power would be like trying not to step on anyone's toes without an awareness of one's feet.
~Right Use of Power (Barstow, 2015)

Personal Interest & Rationale

Graduate students are taught that a power differential exists particularly in therapeutic settings. We are warned about the misuse of power through a fear-based lens with a focus on sexual, financial and physical means (Hart 2002). Vital attention to "right use of power" (Barstow, 2015) is necessary in the education of therapists so that we can move away from being guided by the litigious nature of ethical codes and into a more humanistic way of expressing our desire to do no harm. I am proposing to increase ethical competency through experiential means, adding to the existing education. Being educated in the nuances of power dynamics facilitates a therapeutic robustness and should be an ethical imperative for counselling therapists. I am a trainer with the Hakomi Education Network (HEN) which requires new training to make the education of ethics more explicit. HEN uses an experiential learning model making the network a great platform on which to pilot this project.

Hakomi is a heart-centred method of relational embodied mindfulness and assisted self-study created by Ron Kurtz.

Literature Highlights

- "Unfortunately, [the ethic of care] may not receive adequate attention in graduate training programs" (Pope & Vasquez, 2016, p. 64).
- "As central as power is to social life and to theoretical inquiries in the social sciences, it has received only sporadic attention from psychologists" (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson, 2003, p. 3).
- "A defining attribute of the professional is the recognition, understanding, and careful handling of the considerable power—and the personal responsibility for that power—inherent in the role" (Pope & Vasquez, 2016, p. 63).
- "Possessing power changes the powerholder" (Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003, p. 9) and usually not for the better.
- Know the difference between intention and impact (Barstow, 2015).
- Only within a context of caring about the client's wellbeing is our role power justified (Pope & Vasquez, 2016).
- "The core of ethical sensitivity comes from acquiring a felt sense of the power differential" (Weiss, Johanson and Monda, 2015, p. 140).
- The personhood of the therapist is the tool that can affect change; we "create the context in which healing wants to happen" (Kurtz, personal communication, 2004-11).

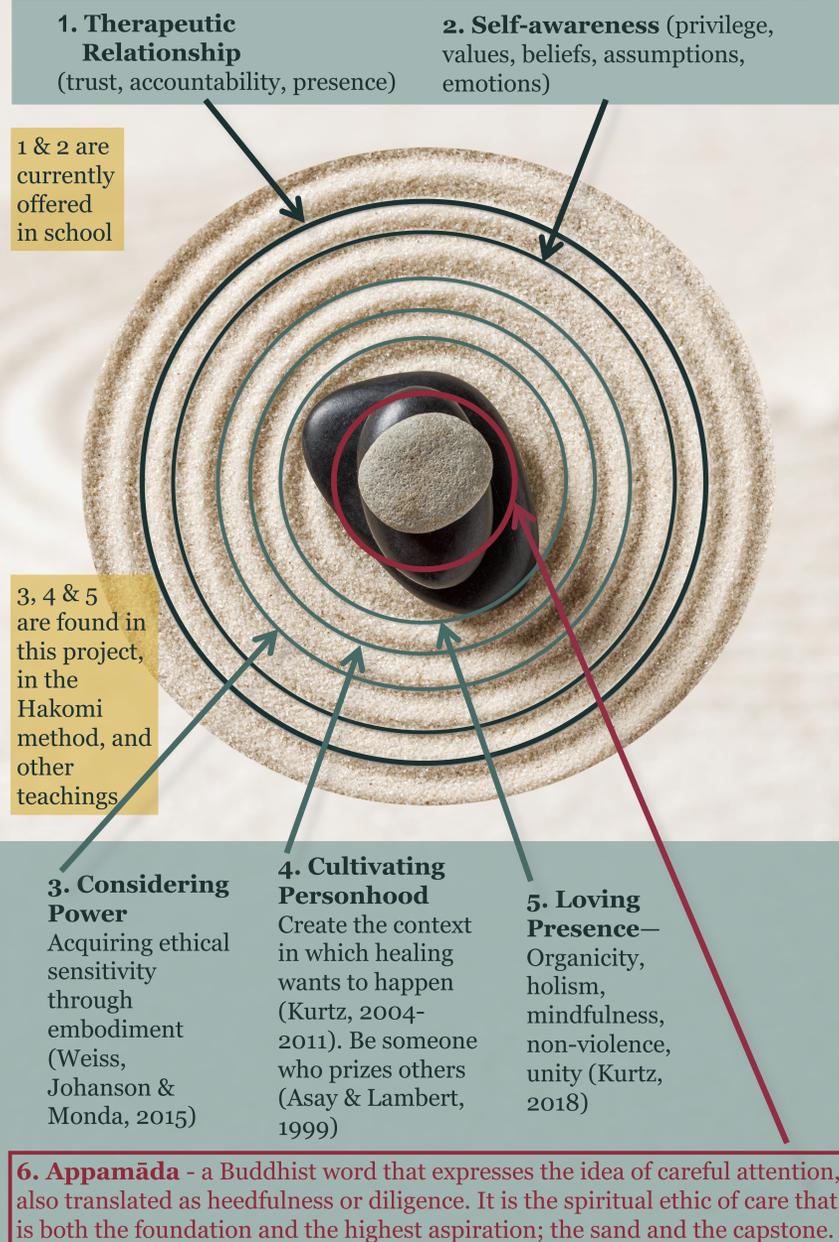


Figure 1. The Aspirations in Relation

The power differential is a concept of which student counsellors are meant to feel the gravity without ever having learned the nuances. By paying close attention to how we embody our relationship to power, combined with a deep practice of non-violence and attunement to others, we will discover how to use power responsibly. This way of being calls forth our diligence, our commitment to an ethic of care that informs our radical presence in the collaborative unfolding of a therapy session. I see this as heart-centred, spiritually-integrated psychotherapy. The initial project is aimed at HEN trainers who would then present the workshop to their training student population. I will offer to present this workshop in person, or through technology, to these trainings as a guest trainer. I envision an expanding audience, perhaps including teaching this workshop as part of an ethics course to graduate students in schools like St. Stephen's College. My hope is to turn attention toward more heart-centred education.

Heartfelt acknowledgments to: Ron Kurtz for the foundation; My Hakomi teachers for depth; SSC for breadth; Cedar Barstow for inspiration.

Webinar & Workshop

Goal: To co-create a workshop with HEN trainers for HEN students to learn how to embody robust ethicality through experiential learning.

Part I A 3-hour interactive webinar

This webinar will be offered on Zoom technology, an online meeting platform. In this online workshop I will lead a discussion about the importance of explicitly teaching ethical competency as a spiritual and therapeutic responsibility. Additionally, there are experiential exercises designed to self-study the embodiment of the power differential and other ethical considerations such as conflict management germane to a team of trainers. Feedback about reactions evoked by these exercises will be woven into our understanding of how we are in relation to these concepts.

Part II A downloadable PDF of an experiential workshop

This ready-made workshop is designed for the HEN trainers and teachers attending the webinar to offer their students in ongoing trainings. The objective is to facilitate phase II of the ethical framework presented at the international HEN meeting in Spain, in September of 2019. Phase II involves teaching an embodied understanding of ethical personhood to help current and future students become more ethically competent. "Awareness suffused with an ethos of ethical of care" (Lomas, 2016) is the aspiration toward which we are aimed in our education.

Target Audience: Hakomi Education Network (HEN) Trainers & Teachers



"To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work"

~Mary Oliver

Reflections & Next Steps